



CELEBRATION OF ONE OF CHRISTIANITY'S MOST IMPORTANT RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES - HOLY LIGHT - TO BE UNREASONABLY RESTRICTED BY ISRAELI POLICE

This week marks the holiest week in Christianity - Holy Week. We recall the events that led to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour and we remember His glorious resurrection. The celebration of the Holy Light Ceremony, is a great moment that ties the faithful to the light of Jesus Christ. This ceremony has been faithfully taking place in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for nearly 2,000 years, attracting Christians from around the world.

Each year, the Churches coordinate with the authorities to ensure this ceremony can take place without issue. Notably, last year barriers were imposed by the Israel Authority throughout the Old City that made impossible the access of our local Christian Communities pilgrims from attending the Holy Light Ceremony in the Holy Sepulchre, impeding their freedom to worship and witness the miracle of the resurrection.

This year, after many attempts made in good will, we are not able to coordinate with the Israeli authorities, as they are enforcing unreasonable, and unprecedented restrictions on access to the Holy Sepulchre - more so than last year. These heavy-handed restrictions will limit access to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Holy Light Ceremony. Police are unfairly and inappropriately placing the burden on the churches to issue invitations, while tying the Churches' hands with unreasonable restrictions that will prevent worshippers from attending particularly our local community. This make difficult our coordination with the police.

As we the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, the Custody of the Holy Land and the Armenian Patriarchate clearly stated in our various statements, we shall continue to uphold the Status Quo customs, and the ceremony will be held as customary for two millennia and all who wish to worship with us are invited to attend. With that made clear, we leave the authorities to act as they will. The Churches will freely worship and do so in peace.